



## **CHARLOTTE AREA TRANSIT SYSTEM VANPOOL DRIVER'S MANUAL**

### **Introduction**

CATS Vanpool is fast becoming the alternative of choice for many commuters in the Charlotte region. The CATS Vanpool is a service offered by the Charlotte Area Transit System for commuters who would like to have more choices in their ride to work. Volunteering to be a vanpool driver or rider helps not only the commuting public, but the environment as well.

Let's look at some of the facts about vanpooling.

1. Vanpooling reduces air pollution by reducing gas consumption, exhaust emissions, and every vehicle left at home helps improve air quality. Did you know that forty to sixty percent of the pollutants are caused by transportation sources?
2. Vanpooling saves money, it can cut commuting costs 50% or more. Just think about how much you pay in gasoline, wear and tear on your vehicle, insurance and probably parking fees.
3. It helps business by decreasing absenteeism, increased productivity and provides employees that arrive on time and ready for a new day.

By now you may be asking how do you go about becoming involved in vanpooling, well the process is very simple. One of the first things you need to do is speak with co-workers, friends at church, talk with your neighbors and see if they would like to save on their commuting cost and participate in the program.

A commuter can start a vanpool with nine people, with one of those individuals being the primary driver. The primary driver is the critical link in forming the vanpool. He or she acts as the vanpool "leader" and drives on a regular basis, collects fares, keeps

records, help recruit riders, keeps the van clean and notifies our department with any maintenance problems. In exchange for these services, the primary driver rides for free and is entitled to use the van for personnel use, up to 100 miles per month. Each vanpool can have as many back-up drivers as they wish. Each potential driver or back-up driver must complete and sign a vanpool driver application. CATS then processes the application with the City's Department of Insurance and Risk Management Division (DIRM). Once CATS has received approval of the application CATS can sign a lease agreement between the driver and the CATS Vanpool Program.

This lease agreement covers the responsibilities of the driver.

### **Driver Responsibility**

The driver's responsibilities are to:

1. complete a vanpool riders list and keep it current and make sure each rider signs a driver/rider agreement. This agreement informs the rider of the time and place of the designated pick-up and drop-off points;
2. complete the driver's log everyday and send it in with the monthly lease check. This is an important part of the vanpool program as these logs are used to complete the yearly report for the Federal government. The form must report the van's daily mileage and the number of riders for any day the van is in service;
3. collect fares from the members of the vanpool. Each vanpool is free to set up its own record-keeping, however, the driver is responsible for sending the monthly payments to CATS. The payments are due no later than the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. They should be mailed to:

Charlotte Transportation Center  
310 East Trade Street  
Charlotte, NC 28202

4. it is the responsibility of each vanpool driver or back-up driver to keep the van clean inside and out. If problems occur with the van, the vanpool coordinator should be paged at 704-565-6260 or 704-505-6477.

## **Fueling**

Fuel is available at any Fuelman station ([www.fuelmancarolinas.com](http://www.fuelmancarolinas.com)). Fuelman has 193 North Carolina sites and 96 South Carolina sites. Each vanpool is given a site location guide when the van is assigned. Vanpool drivers will be issued two Fuelman cards (one is the driver's card and the second is the vehicle's card). These two cards are required for each fueling transaction. The driver's card is assigned a personal identification number (PIN).

The driver, the vehicle, the date, and the location and odometer readings are identified on the Fuelman reports forwarded to the vanpool coordinator. The fuelman report will be reviewed by the coordinator to ensure that no unauthorized entries are made.

The vanpool driver is allowed 100 free miles per month for personal use. Any mileage over the 100 miles will be charged to the driver at the rate of .34 cents per mile, or CATS approved rate. The driver should mail a separate check to cover this expense.

## **Vanpool Etiquette**

Although to many rules can become burdensome and common sense is usually sufficient, the intent of setting up some practical ground rules is to avoid future misunderstandings and the difficulties which arise from them. The purpose of vanpooling is, after all, to achieve economy, safety and convenience in commuting.

Every vanpool group develops its own personality. Helping everyone to feel welcome in the group and developing comradery is important to the success of any vanpool. Some groups have developed democratic approaches to each decision affecting the group, such as a route change to accommodate a prospective rider. Other vanpools have operated quite successfully where the driver makes essentially all of the decisions, bearing in mind that his/her "customers" have a choice of accepting those decisions or changing to another form of commuting. Whichever style you adopt, it should be consistent with your personality and should be done in consultation with your riders for best results.

Try to take advantage of the opportunities vanpooling presents to make commuting a reasonably pleasant experience. A chance to read, catch some rest, converse and share with others are all possible within the same vanpool. A few simple ground rules, agreed to before starting up, will avoid conflict down the road. At a brief vanpool formation meeting, preferable 2-3 weeks before your van is scheduled for on-the-road commuting, your group should get initial ground rules such as a agreement on a radio policy (neutral background music works well), unscheduled stops, changes in the van route or times as well as delineating regular routes and stops at this time. Back-up carpool arrangements and wait times should also be agreed on. Although the process

seems very formal, establishing an atmosphere of informality and cooperation will lead more quickly to the resolution of all issues. Occasionally, all present will not agree on the final majority plan and a search for an additional new rider or two that will commit to the adopted set of rules may be required.

Most forming groups find it extremely advantageous to meet within a few days right after a vanpool starts. Nearly always there are adjustments to initial ground rules which the experience of a few days of operation require.

### **Guaranteed Ride Home**

In case of an emergency at home during the midday, vanpool riders are guaranteed a ride home to their morning boarding location. Please call 704-336-RIDE for assistance.

### **Accidents**

If a van is involved in an accident, the following procedures must be followed:

1. Call the local Police Department, no matter how minor the accident or what the location.
2. Notify the vanpool coordinator at 704-336-3892 or 704-505-6477 or 704-565-6260. After business hours, call Equipment Services at 704-336-2722 to report the accident. Equipment Services will arrange having the van towed and providing transportation for riders.
3. The driver should ask the police officer for a report number and get the names, addresses and phone numbers of persons involved, including any witnesses. Drivers and riders should not make any statements to anyone other than the police as to what happened. The vanpool coordinator will come to the site, if possible, to prepare an accident report and obtain any police accident report.

The following policy shall govern vanpool accidents. Any accident involving a vanpool driver that is ruled the fault of the driver and preventable will result in the following action:

1. First Occurrence – driver pays \$250.00 deductible on insurance and is counseled by CATS vanpool coordinator.
2. Second Occurrence Within Three Years – driver pays \$250 deductible and is required to complete a certified defensive driving course.

3. Third Occurrence Within Three Years – driver pays \$250 deductible and loses van driving privileges. The van is returned to CATS and a new driver is found for the vanpool. You may still ride just not drive.

It is extremely important that vanpool drivers and back-up drivers operate the van in a safe and courteous manner.

### **Maintenance**

The driver will be responsible for day to day maintenance. Regular checks should be made on:

1. oil levels,
2. tires for uneven wear,
3. fuel,
4. keeping the van clean and with an overall good appearance.

While the vans are under warranty, maintenance will be provided by the dealership where the vans were purchased. After the warranty period, maintenance will be performed by the City of Charlotte's Fleet Management Division.

When your van is due for preventive maintenance (PM), contact the vanpool coordinator to arrange for your van to be picked up.

If your van breaks down during normal business hours (8am – 5pm), contact the vanpool coordinator at 704-336-3892 or 704-505-6477 (pager) or 704-565-6260. After hours, call 704-336-2722. Transportation will be provided for the vanpool.

For regular PM service, please provide any information about problems with the vans to the vanpool coordinator. This information will be passed along to Fleet Management. Van service may require three to four days, depending on the amount of service needed by the van. A loaner vehicle will be provided whenever your van will be in the shop overnight. The vanpool coordinator will contact you when service is completed on your van.

## **IMPORTANT NUMBERS**

Vanpool Coordinator	704-336-3892 704-579-1657 704-565-6260
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Equipment Services (Night Breakdown)	704-336-2722
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Insurance and Risk Management	704-336-3301
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Guaranteed Ride Home	704-336-RIDE
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